Making a Difference Together

Impact Assessment:
The Lloyds TSB Foundation for England and Wales' Collaborative Grant-Making Programme

A Report on the Collaborative Programme which encourages co-ordination, co-operation and collaboration between voluntary organisations, to enhance the quality of their work helping disabled and disadvantaged people

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Preface

The Lloyds TSB Foundation for England and Wales has for a number of years invested time and energy into exploring programme evaluation and impact assessment. The results of our work during 2004 are set out in this report but should be viewed in the context of our overall aims for impact assessment - also outlined in the report. As in previous years we have involved a number of the organisations to whom we have been able to offer funding, and again as before we have used the Foundation's own resources for much of the work, but this year also looking to independent external consultancy advice to ensure we were not simply patting ourselves on the back. Impact assessment has helped enormously in the internal development of the Foundation requiring us to think through a number of questions about why we support certain activities, how we give that support and what difference it makes to users and local communities. This year the assessment has informed the Foundation's Strategic Review and its decision to develop a number of key thematic areas, of which Collaboration remains one.

Over three years we have undertaken different pilots. The first looked at all our donations and Areas of Special Interest, whilst the second focused more closely on one area of our support - challenging disadvantage and discrimination within the field of mental health. The third project, in 2004, examined the Collaborative Programme – an important area of work for the Foundation but also an area of great interest to the community and voluntary sectors in general.

As in earlier years, our intention is to share the experience of impact assessment with a number of other Trusts and Foundations, with government, and with the sector as a whole. A conference in early 2005 aims to encourage further thinking across the grant giving sector about impact assessment. Our view is that whilst evaluation is always difficult and often subjective, the more it can be based on systematic attempts to gather and use information, the better we will be able to target our resources to meet the needs of disadvantaged communities and groups effectively.

It is important to acknowledge the efforts that the Foundation has put into the impact assessment initiative, and to thank in particular Colin Rochester who acted as external consultant, and Zoë Woods who managed the project. In addition a number of Foundation staff supported the assessment and undertook much of the field work upon which this report is based – Kathleen Duncan, Birgitta Clift, Steve Sibbald, Jude Stevens, Damien Wilson, Karen Argyle, Sue Denning, David Kay, Mike Lewis and Steve Robinson. Feedback shows that the participating organisations find assessment a valuable exercise and we would also like to thank all those organisations whose collaborations we were able to assess.

Professor Murray Stewart
Deputy Chairman

1. INTRODUCTION

Aims and Objectives of the Study

This report sets out the findings of the Lloyds TSB Foundation for England and Wales's third (and final) impact assessment study conducted as part of its three year pilot programme of impact evaluation. The study is a review of the operation of the Foundation's Collaborative Programme which was launched in 2000 to "enhance co-ordination, co-operation and collaboration between voluntary organisations and also between voluntary sector and public sector bodies in certain instances".

The study had two broad aims. The first of these was to inform the Foundation's future grant-making policy and practice. It involved looking for the answers to three questions:

- in what ways and to what extent has the Foundation's focus on promoting collaboration enhanced the effectiveness of the voluntary sector?

- in what ways and to what extent has it enabled voluntary organisations to make a greater difference to the lives of disadvantaged people? and

- should the Foundation continue to maintain this focus as a strategic priority and, if so, how might the delivery of the programme be developed in order to increase the impact of its grant-making?

The second and broader aim of the study was to contribute to learning within the wider voluntary sector. This involved an exploration of:

- the ways in which collaboration can improve the ability of voluntary organisations to achieve their aims and purposes;

- the issues and challenges involved in collaboration and the ways in which these can be addressed; and

- lessons that had been learned for effective practice in collaborative working.

Background

The Lloyds TSB Foundation for England and Wales is an independent grant-making charitable Foundation. The Foundation's mission is to support and work in partnership with charitable organisations which help people, especially those who are disadvantaged or disabled, to play a fuller role in communities throughout England and Wales.

The Foundation's income is derived from its shareholding in the Lloyds TSB Group. In 2004 the income of the Foundation for England and Wales was £22.7 million. The majority of this income is allocated through 9 English regional budgets and a budget for Wales. In addition, the Foundation has a budget for supporting charities which work throughout England and Wales.

The Collaborative Programme represented a new approach to the Foundation's grant-making. It could be seen as a more strategic or proactive approach than previous grant-making practice and, for the English regional and the Wales programmes, involved considerably larger amounts of funding. And, perhaps most significantly, the new programme involved a commitment of staff time to assist the development of proposals and provide continuing support to successful applicants. It has also proved

a popular initiative; since 2000 a total of 181 grants have been made from the Collaborative Programme at a total cost of £8.6 million.

The Study

This impact assessment differed from its two predecessors in two respects. In the first place, the aims of the study meant that a qualitative approach was required rather than the quantitative methods used for the first two assessments. In the second place, a decision was taken to involve an independent consultant in the process rather than relying on the unaided efforts of Lloyds TSB Foundation staff.

The primary method of data collection was semi-structured interviews with key individuals in the organisations participating in the collective arrangements. The key areas explored in the interviews were:

- How the collaboration was initiated and why;
- How the partner organisations came together and how the proposal to the Foundation was developed;
- How the collaboration worked, exploring the methods of working together;
- Difficulties that had arisen in working together and how these have been overcome;
- Outcomes of the collaboration, both expected and unexpected;
- Impact of the collaboration on service users, staff, other groups;
- The sustainability of the collaborative arrangements and any possible further developments.

These data were supplemented by written documentation – some from the Foundation's files and other material collected at the time of interview.

Eighteen case examples – 10% of the total grants made - were selected in order to provide a cross section of the programme's successful applications and to ensure that the experience involved would enable us to draw lessons from it. Nine of these were from the England and Wales programme and three each from the Wales, East of England and North West programmes.

A total of 27 interviews - 26 face-to-face and 1 by telephone – were carried out by the project team between 31st March and 2nd June 2004 and, in all, 91 people took part.

Additional data were collected by the independent consultant from semi-structured interviews with key members of the Foundation's staff at national and regional level.

The project team consisted of the independent consultant, Colin Rochester who is Director of the Centre for Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Management at Roehampton University, together with the Director General, five Regional Managers, the England and Wales Grants Manager and two Grants Officers and Zoë Woods who managed the project for the Foundation. Additional input and guidance was given by the Foundation's Deputy Chairman, Professor Murray Stewart.

Colin Rochester was responsible, with Zoë Woods, for the design of the research including the drafting of the interview schedule, analysis of the data, and writing the report. He also took part in 8 of

the interviews and, with Murray Stewart, led a briefing day for the project team which involved pilot interviews with organisations whose collaboration had been funded by the programme but which was not included in the sample.

The Report

This is the Final Report of the study and it will look in turn at:

- the diversity of the collaborative arrangements studied;
- their achievements and impacts
- lessons from the study; and
- conclusions, and recommendations to the Foundation.

2 THE NATURE OF COLLABORATION AND THE RANGE AND DIVERSITY OF COLLABORATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

One striking feature of the collaborative arrangements funded by the programme has been their rich diversity. This is not accidental; rather than providing the new grant-making venture with explicit and detailed criteria, the Foundation has developed the parameters for the Collaborative Programme in the light of the expressed needs of voluntary sector organisations. Before attempting to assess the achievements and impact of the programme, therefore, we need to explore the key dimensions of its diversity.

Rationale and Drivers of Collaboration

One important dimension was the reason why organisations had formed partnerships. The availability of funding was, of course, a factor in the development of many of the collaborative arrangements we studied and some of our interviewees were very open about this: "we have struggled with core funding. Project funding wreaks havoc. The money for collaboration was largely core funding in our eyes". There were, however, more strategic purposes underpinning the eagerness of organisations to collaborate and it might be more accurate to view the existence of the Collaborative Programme as a stimulus rather than a cause.

The study identified three principal "drivers" of collaboration.

- The need to address issues or unmet needs which required a multi-agency response: this appeared to be the main driver in a third of our case examples.

- The need to develop, improve or extend existing service provision; this was the key motivation for almost half of the collaborations studied; and

- The need to develop organisational capacity: this was the rationale for four of the eighteen partnerships in our study.

The reality is a little more complex than this analysis would suggest: the boundaries between the different motivations are far from clear-cut while collaboration was typically driven by more than one of these aspirations.

Models of Collaborative Relationships

Perhaps the most significant dimension is the nature of the relationship between the organisations involved in the collaboration. We have identified three models of collaborative relationship within the eighteen case examples and are cautiously confident that these would also hold good for the programme as a whole. They are:

Model One: Collaboration between equals

This involves the more or less equal participation of a number of organisations in pursuit of a shared aim or purpose. All the participants contribute to the work of the partnership and all of them – and their users or beneficiaries – stand to benefit from its work. This kind of arrangement is likely to improve both the effectiveness of the participating organisations and the services they provide to their users: indeed the two are closely related. It also will impact on or have implications for the "core business" of the partner organisations and may well result in the creation of a collective identity or legal personality for the partnership which differentiates it from any or all of the participating organisations.

Model One: The DEMAND Forum

The Forum brought together four comparatively small organisations which were all involved in the design and manufacture of equipment for people with disabilities. Collaboration has enabled them to develop better risk assessment policies; share training; promote their work jointly; and develop a new piece of equipment.

Model Two: Collaboration between a lead agency and its partners

In the second model, one of the organisations involved takes the lead in forming the partnership and formulating its goals. In order to develop its work and deliver a new or better service, it seeks the collaboration of one or more organisations to provide the expertise, access or resources that it does not have. The partnership is designed, first and foremost, to improve the service to users or beneficiaries but it may also serve to improve organisational capacity and effectiveness.

Model Two: The Beth Johnson Foundation
The Beth Johnson Foundation undertakes "innovative and developmental work that has the potential to develop, influence and challenge the role and status of Older People in Society". It developed the Centre for Intergenerational Practice as a means of promoting work that brought different generations together in activities that develop better understanding between them. The Centre was established through the work of a multi agency Advisory Committee drawn from academia, voluntary organisations and the statutory sector. The Lloyds TSB Foundation grant met the cost of a mapping study; a seminar series, a directory and good practice guides.

Model Three: Collaboration between organisations with resources and those that need them

The third model involves a more limited and pragmatic form of collaboration which aims to improve the capacity or effectiveness of some or all of the participating organisations by developing cost effective ways of sharing resources. Typically, resources invested in one organisation are shared with, or put at the disposal of, a number of other – perhaps smaller – partner organisations thus spreading the costs whilst generating collaborative benefit.

Model Three: Merseyside 3CT

Funding from the Foundation has supported the employment of an IT specialist to provide advice and technical support to three local organisations – Merseyside Society for Deaf People; Sefton Carers and Weston Spirit - which lacked the capacity to make effective use of their IT resources.

A Fourth Model?

Two of the eighteen case examples we studied did not conform to any of these models. In these cases the Foundation had provided support for "devolved" collaboration by funding organisations to enable them to promote and support collaborative provision at a more local level. We have tended to treat these as exceptional cases which were funded while the boundaries of the programme were less well defined than they have since become.

It is possible to see these models as a hierarchy with descending levels of intensity in the relationships involved and significance for the organisations involved. In particular, Model One collaborations have the potential to develop in the long run into mergers – if that is what the partners choose to do - while Model Three could be seen in terms of a provider-customer relationship rather than a collaboration.

Limitations of the Models

We believe these models to be robust and helpful but we are conscious of their limitations. In the first place there is a boundary problem; in particular, some of our case examples were positioned close to where model one was bordered by model two and we were uncertain how best to categorise them. Secondly, they are one dimensional and this may obscure the diversity of the collaborative arrangements represented by each model. Other key dimensions are explored in the remainder of this section.

Scope and Scale

A third significant dimension of the diversity of our subject matter was the scale and scope of the work involved in the collaboration.

One significant distinction can be drawn between those with finite and time limited objectives – the creation of a website; development of health promotion materials; and the up-dating of a professional training course – and those with longer term and ongoing aims – such as the development of the capacity of infrastructure bodies to support the work of member organisations and the development of services for older people from Black and Minority Ethnic communities who need support when moving into nursing or residential accommodation.

Variations in the scale and scope of the support provided by Lloyds TSB Foundation in terms of the size of the grant award and the period of funding were also marked. The size of grant made to the eighteen case examples ranged from just under £7,000 to £250,000 with an average (mean) of £78,550 and a median figure of £75,000. The funding periods varied from 3 years (seven examples); 2 years (seven examples) down to 1 year (four examples).

Another factor determining the scope or complexity of the collaboration was the number of organisations involved and the degree of homogeneity between them. Two of the case examples had the minimum number of partners – two – while nine of them had between three and five partners and the other seven had six or more participating organisations. In half of the collaborations studied the participants were all voluntary organisations while the other half also involved both voluntary and statutory sector agencies. Finally, in two thirds of the examples studied the participating organisations were of a similar size while the other third involved collaboration between organisations of a very different scale – notably one which paired one of the country's largest charities with a tiny specialist body.

Forms of Collaboration

At the heart of the collaborative arrangements was the sharing of information and pooling of expertise. This was common to all of the case examples and provided the basis for a range of other forms of collaboration including:

- creating wider networks through which to disseminate information and influence practice;
- undertaking joint research to identify need and audit existing provision;
- sharing premises and other resources;
- combining and rationalising existing services;
- developing new kinds of provision; and
- taking joint action to improve the effectiveness of partner organisations.

Salience of Lloyds TSB Foundation Support

There were also important variations in the significance of the Foundation's support for the projects both in terms of financial support and the contribution made by grant-making staff.

Financial support

- In eleven of the eighteen case examples the grant was intended to cover the full costs of the collaborative project.
- In a further two cases the full costs were funded in the first year of support and then "tapered" in years two and three.
- In two other cases the grant could be seen as "pump-priming" – meeting the costs of a salary or running costs for one year only.
- In the remaining three examples the Lloyds TSB Foundation grant met the costs of part of a much larger programme (between 20% and 40% of the total).

Staff involvement

- In seven of the case examples Lloyds TSB Foundation staff had played an important role in identifying the project or providing the stimulus for the application (or both).
- In eight of them they had made a significant contribution to the development of the application or the design of the project (or both).
- In ten cases Foundation staff had remained in contact and continued to support the collaboration usually through participation in and advisory group or steering committee.
- Interviewees reported "little or no involvement" by staff in only three cases.

- All of the cases studied would have welcomed collaborative advice from the Foundation, and suggested facilitation of contact between organisations with experience of collaborating and providing opportunities to share collaborative learning as further ways in which the Foundation could have offered support.

Further Complexities

This account of various dimensions of the diversity of collaborative arrangements found in the study does not do full justice to the complexity of the material we collected. There are two important additional comments to be made before we move on to look at the achievements and impact of these collaborations. The first of these is that a number of the case examples involve more than one "layer" of collaboration. In these cases, the initial partnership between a group of organisations takes the form of a steering group which assumes responsibility for taking the project or programme of work forward but which needs the collaboration of a wider network of organisations in order to meet its goals. The second additional complexity is the tendency of a number of the collaborative arrangements to develop and change over time. What began, for example, as a perceived need to share information and identify the totality of the skills available across several organisations became the basis for joint promotion of their activities and the management of change within them. The contribution made by the individual partners and the roles they play in the partnership may also change over time.

3. A QUESTION OF VALUE: THE ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT OF THE COLLABORATIONS STUDIED

Achievements – Intended and Unintended

Given the diversity of the case examples studied we are unable to summarise what these eighteen collaborations achieved in a simple table which reduces them to a series of meaningful numbers. We have also rejected the equally unhelpful alternative approach of providing a catalogue listing all the individual achievements involved. Instead we have tried to analyse the kinds of intended and unintended benefits that flowed from the collaborations we studied and to give some idea of the frequency and scale of these across the eighteen cases.

New and Additional Services

Two thirds of the collaborative arrangements studied had led to the development of new or additional services. These included:

- a schools based programme aimed at involving fathers in the support of their children's development which reached 60-70 fathers and 130 children;
- provision of advice and information services to an isolated community on an accessible site;
- a web site providing a "24/7 one-stop-shop" and attracting 12,000 visits per month from parents of children with speech and language difficulties and the relevant professionals;
- a youth theatre/arts based programme which engaged 70 of the most vulnerable young people aged 16-21 in order to increase their self-esteem and self-confidence;
- information and advice services aimed at older people from BME communities facing the transition from independent living to residential care;
- three schemes aimed at helping vulnerable young people to move into independent living; and
- the provision of legal advice services across 22 local areas in Wales.

Better Co-ordination of Existing Services

Services were also improved through better co-ordination; as well as producing a new web-site for those concerned with children's speech and language problems, the three organisations concerned with that collaboration reviewed their individual services in the light both of the new services and the continuing work of their partners. Other examples include:

- the transformation of fragmented provision of English language teaching into an integrated programme with a much higher take-up rate;
- the development of a family centre which brought a whole range of services under one roof; and
- shared premises which enabled three organisations to open to the public for longer hours with staff sharing reception duties.

Development of Resources

As well as improving service provision in these ways the cases we studied also led to the production of resources which will make a long-term contribution to the work of the organisations concerned. Notable examples are:

- the development of a CD-ROM which assisted people with disabilities to access direct payments;

- a revised and up-to-date distance learning course for professional fundraisers with an initial recruitment of 97 students;

- a set of materials including a television programme and video addressing issues of mental health in the Chinese community;

- a database, leaflets and other resources to assist BME community leaders to assist older people in their transition to residential care;

- IT systems and training courses based on an audit of the participating organisations practice and designed for dissemination across the voluntary sector; and

- the acquisition and development of substantial; premises as a "hub" for voluntary organisations across a county.

Raising Awareness and Understanding

As well as making a direct impact on service provision and developing resources, the case examples also sought to raise awareness and understanding about issues organisations felt needed addressing. These included:

- raising as an issue the absence of fathers as important actors in policies and services aimed at supporting families; this partnership succeeded in creating more "father-friendly" practices in a number of key agencies in the area it served – and, in one instance, more widely;

- gaining acknowledgement from a large number of organisations and individuals of the value of inter-generational projects and development work;

- dispelling some of the stigma and negative associations of mental health within the Chinese community and raising the profile of the issue;

- enabling vulnerable young people to present the circumstances of their lives to policy makers and service managers through the use of drama;

- ensuring that the voice of people with disabilities is not only heard at local level but also when their national body lobbies parliament; and

- achieving a "seat at the table" and the ability to talk to politicians about issues of social exclusion.

Information and Communication

Raising awareness and understanding were based on the collection and dissemination of information. Two organisations had undertaken formal surveys or audits of the current position in their field of interest before making attempts to build on that base-line. Information collected in this way and by less formal methods was disseminated in a variety of ways such as:

- seminars, conferences and other events;
- the creation and maintenance of networks; and
- newsletters and other written (or electronic) communications.

Effectiveness and Efficiency

As noted in an earlier section of this report, collaborations were more likely to be driven by an issue- or service-related goal than by the pursuit of cost effectiveness and efficiency gains. Interviewees did, however, highlight some ways in which they had achieved improvements of this kind.

- Sharing premises was the only way in which the organisations involved could afford rent which was beyond the resources of any one of them.
- Organisations involved in manufacturing equipment for people with disabilities could combine their expertise to improve their standards of risk management and share the costs of external consultation and training.
- There were clear savings when three organisations combined to create a single website rather than three separate sites. Furthermore, it was less expensive to provide information in this way rather than by post or phone. Those resources could be used to respond to people needing more intense support or detailed advice.
- There were clear gains when three organisations shared the services of an IT specialist (and his organisational back-up) rather than trying to meet this need individually.

Impact on Service Users or Beneficiaries

We found very little direct evidence of the impact of these projects on the service users or beneficiaries of the organisations involved. In some cases this was due to the timing of the study; projects had not reached the stage when the benefits to the user could be assessed. More commonly the nature of the project meant that the causal chain linking the activity with benefits to users was complex and indirect. To take an extreme example, improving the competence of fundraisers should improve the ability of organisations to access the resources they need (although it might be difficult to isolate that factor from others) and increased resources ought to have a relationship with service levels and quality but it would be difficult to demonstrate that this was the case. Similarly, raising awareness and increasing understanding about specific needs should lead to improved provision but the causal link is not easily established.

In some cases, however, there was some evidence of a probable impact on users both in terms of the services provided for them and their ability to take greater control of their own affairs.

In the first place, there were several examples where services had become more accessible. Two of the projects involved opening premises in areas of high need which were some distance from existing services while a third brought additional services to remote rural areas. Another initiative has meant that a number of service providers will come to a charity's premises to meet the users rather than expecting them to make a number of journeys to seek help. The web-based information service also represented a significant extension of accessibility, being available at any hour of the day and any day of the week.

In the second place, there was some evidence that services had been improved. A new county wide care group had been formed to meet the need of asylum seekers in one area; organisations had developed "father-friendly" services in another; health, housing and social services had been better co-ordinated elsewhere; and those whose IT problems had been resolved found themselves able to devote more staff time to service provision.

The evidence for user empowerment was more limited but interviewees in three of the case examples noted some impact of this kind: the web-site had given people confidence in their ability to access unaided the information they needed; in another example users were increasingly influencing decisions rather than leaving them to staff; and the opening of a multi-purpose centre on a local estate had the potential to act as a catalyst for a sense of identity as a community.

Impact on Organisations Involved in the Collaboration

There was, unsurprisingly, a good deal more evidence about the impact of the collaboration on the participating organisations. For a few it has led to growth and development but, more commonly, interviewees reported impacts in terms of shared learning and greater knowledge; different ways of working; enhanced competence and confidence; and, to a lesser extent, a higher profile or reputation with the outside world.

Of the three organisations which reported significant growth or development as a result of their participation in a collaborative arrangement, two were very small bodies. Association with a larger partner gave one of them the legitimacy to access major funding for the first time while the other reported that the project had improved service development and increased the number of volunteers and beneficiaries involved. The third was a second tier organisation which recruited 44 additional volunteers through the project and whose membership – partly as a result of the collaboration – quadrupled.

The acquisition of knowledge through shared learning was a common theme. Interviewees found the collaborative arrangements the means of, *inter alia*:

- Developing policies and plans for the future of their organisation;
- Tackling problems and issues with the help of colleagues from other organisations;
- Developing a community of interest around mutual recognition of what the partners were doing;
- Developing a more strategic view of the issues;
- Accessing partners' expertise for staff training; and
- Acquiring a better understanding of the role and place of one's organisation in the greater scheme of things.

Some interviewees reported that the collaborative experience had given them reassurance and greater confidence in their ability to manage their organisations. They had gained this from a feeling that they were part of a larger community dealing collectively with the problems that had worried them as individual organisations and "sharing the learning and the mistakes we've made". And, as well as the reassurance of "moving in a group direction rather than individually, the importance of networking and friendship was emphasised: "I can pick up the phone and ask if the others have come across the same problem without feeling a fool".

A number of the interviewees also felt that the collaborative experience had changed or was changing the way their organisation worked. In some cases this was a direct result of engaging with the issue at the heart of the collaboration; organisations, for example, developed materials and ways of working that embodied the father friendly message of the partnership. Others, however, were less predictable: for more than one organisation looking at how to meet the specific needs of BME communities in partnership with other bodies had led to a review of approaches to existing advice and information services and the assumptions that underlay them. In another case, a "household name" charity was developing a new strand of work and putting a greater emphasis on its provision for an older age group.

Finally, some interviewees felt that involvement in the collaboration had enhanced their reputation in the wider world. The development of a centre where local authority and health service provision is offered alongside the services of voluntary organisations has led to a new kind of credibility for the latter in the eyes of the statutory bodies. Another organisation felt that it has earned greater respect and "clout" because of the clearer focus gained from its involvement in collaborative working. And two groups of organisations believe they collectively have the ear of government bodies which would ignore them as individual organisations.

Wider Impacts

We can also trace the impact of some of the projects beyond the organisations involved in the collaborative arrangements and their service users or beneficiaries. The sharing of ideas about intergenerational projects through newsletters, conferences, seminars and workshops has led to a cascade effect which has stimulated activity by organisations not originally involved in the partnership and created a climate where funders are happy to support projects of this kind. By contrast, the marked success with some agencies – Sure Start and the Teenage Pregnancy Unit - of the push for father-friendly policies has not been achieved within the statutory child protection and domestic violence services where it is arguably most needed.

One of the collaborative projects studied is set to have a major impact on the resources available to voluntary organisations across three counties initially but to be extended to five. The overall aim is to develop in each county a "hub" for voluntary sector activity either in the form of dedicated premises (a physical hub) or electronically (a virtual hub) or both. One of the participating organisations is developing a £3 million project to provide a physical hub.

Among the projects whose wider impact was associated with raising the profile of an issue (discussed earlier in this report) was the collaboration between a major children's charity and a small arts-based organisation. While the primary focus and impact of this work was on the vulnerable young people who participated in the programme, there were also some important additional and wider impacts. In the first place the partnership could be seen as setting an agenda for new ways of working with young people. This involved addressing the lack of specialised training for those working with the 14-19 age group by developing an in-house programme for the organisation's own staff and lobbying for wider change. This has included sending a copy of the

project video to every youth work training body in the country. In the second place, the plays performed by the young people have been used by the Government's Children and Young People's Unit to obtain the views of young people, about the issues raised in its Green Paper, *Every Child Matters*. Feedback from the audience of policy-makers and service managers indicates that the impact of these performances is powerful.

Dissemination and Publicity

One way in which the projects funded under the programme can be seen to have a wider impact is the extent to which they have actively disseminated or publicised their work. Activities of this kind have included:

- high-profile launches of reports and new services
- work featured at national and international conferences
- media coverage – radio, TV and print
- dissemination of reports and other publications and videos; and
- articles in academic journals.

Other projects have not yet reached the stage where they feel it appropriate to disseminate information about their work but plan to do so in the no too distant future.

The Future

In general, interviewees were optimistic about the future of the projects and the collaborative arrangements that underpinned them. In one case the project had come to an end but collaborative work was continuing and in three others the future was seen to depend on securing further funding. Beyond these, the expectation was that collaborative activity would either continue in much the same form or would be further developed. In some cases, the activity was seen as "embedded" in the work of the organisation or the mainstreaming of the project was seen as the next step.

Where changes were anticipated they took the form of:

- revised strategies for the projects or programmes supported by the collaboration;
- moving into additional areas of collaboration with the same partners;
- broadening the collaboration by increasing the number of partners;
- strengthening the partnership by developing closer or more strategic relationships between the organisations; and
- seeking to create more equal relationships between those involved in the collaboration.

Overall, then, the collaborations into which organisations had entered were seen as long-term and capable of further development rather than short term coalitions to achieve limited or essentially short-term objectives.

Furthermore it seems that the collaborative experiences of these 18 case examples have, in general paved the way to a greater willingness to consider collaborative working in the future.

The Value of the Collaborative Approach

There was a very clear consensus that collaboration was the "right" way to address the issues or undertake the case example activities funded by the Programme. For more than a third of the cases, interviewees described collaboration as the "only way" to achieve their goals. Their reasons for this view included:

- no one agency could have done it and the shared ownership of the project had been vitally important;
- but for the collaboration none of this would have happened, and
- it was the only way to ensure they had the necessary skills and resources.

Other interviewees felt that collaboration may not have been essential to the success of the project but that it represented by far the best way forward:

- it was critical to combine parents and professional service providers: it produced an end-product that met the needs of service users;
- as a group we thought more carefully and in more depth about the issues than any of us would have done (individually) with a consultant; and
- there is no one big organisation working in this field so we needed to collaborate.

Finally, a small minority of respondents saw collaboration as a better option than the alternative:

- it was the most expedient way; and
- involving the smaller organisation as a partner rather than a contractor meant that X had the status to say "no, we need to do it this way".

4. MAKING COLLABORATION WORK: LESSONS FROM THE STUDY

Issues and Challenges

The general consensus among participants in this study was thus that working in collaboration had been the only or best means of achieving their aims and that they were confident that the impact of their activities had repaid the investment of time and energy in working in partnership. Making collaboration work, however, was far from straightforward and in this section of the report we look at the key issues and challenges involved in successful collaborative working.

Getting Across the Trust Threshold

In the great majority of the cases studied, the organisations – or the key individuals concerned – had a pre-existing relationship. This might have involved common membership of an umbrella organisation or network; association with a specific campaign; working together on short-term projects; or more informal contacts between key individuals who found themselves at the same meetings. As a minimum they knew enough about one another to recognise shared interests and experiences and a common understanding of the issues. In a number of cases the project was building on previous, less formal ways of working together. Collaboration was made possible by a level of trust between the parties that had been developed in this way. While trust underpinned all of the case examples, it appears to have been most highly developed and prized in the more intense or "pure" forms of partnership (our model one: collaboration between equals for a shared purpose) and less significant in the other forms of collaboration (between a lead agency and its partners and for better use of resources).

Resource Issues

Once across the "trust threshold", the organisations participating in the eighteen case examples we studied faced a number of practical challenges. For some, this took the form of resource limitations. On the one hand projects had made very optimistic assumptions about what could be achieved by a single project worker and, with hindsight, would have either looked to fund a small staff team or to have limited the scope of their ambitions. On the other hand many of them had underestimated the amount of time and effort needed to develop and maintain the mechanisms for collaboration. Other resource issues included the failure to budget adequately for non-staff costs such as travel and running events and lack of clarity about how the funds were to be spent. More significantly, interviewees highlighted the problem of short-term funding for what were long-term activities; the tendency to underestimate the lead-in time needed to get a project started; and their failure to build into their planning a realistic and detailed fund-raising strategy.

Turnover of Staff and Other Participants

In some cases, resource problems were exacerbated by staff turnover. Employing people on short-term contracts to undertake complex tasks for a group of organisations rather than a single employer carries a high risk of difficulties in recruitment and retention. In a few cases the time needed to appoint successive members of staff had been a major factor in the project's slow progress. One collaborative arrangement had also had to cope with turnover among the key individuals in the participating organisations. That they were able to do so is a tribute both to the individuals who remained and also to the robustness of the collaborative arrangements. It also underlines the good fortune of the other cases where much depended on the continuing involvement of key individuals and where a change of chief executive in one of the organisations in the partnership might have led to a reconsideration of its involvement. In another case

interviewees reported initial difficulties in establishing a "stable committee" as individuals changed jobs and their agencies – voluntary and statutory – did not nominate replacements.

Collaboration between Organisations or Individuals?

The last case mentioned is an example of the need for clarity about the identity of the collaborators – and more especially the importance of being clear about the extent to which the collaboration could be seen to be between organisations rather than between individuals within them. In some cases, this did not appear to be an issue. In one case the four chief executives concerned met and made joint decisions which each of them had the authority to implement in his or her organisation. In another, the decision-making forum included those responsible for delivering the services concerned as well as the chief executives. The extent to which governing bodies were informed about or actively involved in the arrangements varied but the occasion when the trustees of one organisation met their counterparts in another of the partner bodies to convince them of the value of maintaining the collaboration seems to be a unique example of full "ownership" of a project by the board. Similarly, the extent to which other staff – and volunteers – of the participating organisations were involved in the collaborative process varied. Against this background the absence of formal, written agreements in some cases meant not only that the organisations concerned had put their faith in high levels of mutual trust but also that they were taking something of a gamble on the continuing involvement of key individuals. That is not to ignore the importance of the contribution made by individuals to the success of collaborative arrangements; personalities played a major role. We were also made aware that some individuals needed to recover from bad experiences of attempts at partnership while others were suffering from "collaboration fatigue".

Problems of Communication

A number of interviewees referred to problems of communication. These seem to have occurred in two sets of circumstances. In the first place, as we have touched on above, there were problems in communicating with people in the participating agencies other than the chief executives or other key individuals concerned. There may have been a few diary problems at the outset for these individuals (solved in one case by the use of deputies where necessary) but communications between them tended to be unproblematic; building on the shared understanding created at face-to-face meetings they were in frequent contact by telephone and e-mail. In one case, however, interviewees were concerned that relations between some members of the groups were closer than with others and the amount and quality of information exchanged varied as a result. The second set of circumstances where communication was an issue was where the number of collaborating organisations was greater than a handful. In one case, a project worker grappled with the problem of keeping in contact with twenty-two organisations which had varying levels of interest in or commitment to the project. In another, the number and geographical spread of the interested organisations meant that e-mail had to be substituted for the face-to-face contact originally planned.

Organisational Compatibility

A number of the case examples involved organisations which appeared highly compatible – in size, area of interest, the identity of their users and their sources of funding. In other cases, we found disparities in size, areas of interest and function. And we expected those collaborations which crossed sector boundaries by involving statutory agencies - and, in two instances, a commercial and an academic body – to pose a challenge of compatibility. Interviewees, however, reported few problems arising from these differences. There were initial adjustments to be made to the different cultures of the participating organisations – even where they appeared most

compatible – but most of the partnerships seem to have developed elements of their own collective identity and culture to deal with this challenge.

Where the differences between organisations did present difficulties for collaboration this was associated with decision-making processes. At one extreme the principal staff member for one small organisation could commit to a course of action "on the spot" at a meeting between the partners and would then have to wait patiently while its much larger partner processed the decision through a number of working groups and committees. More commonly, interviewers reported that joint decisions could take a long time to be ratified because the decision-making cycles of the participating organisations were not synchronised. Other incompatibilities at the operational end of the spectrum – such as different databases and information management systems - were seen as comparatively minor problems to be overcome. Finally, in two cases, voluntary organisations experienced difficulties in their relationship with a statutory partner because the individual involved did not have the authority to deliver what the partners needed.

A Long and Time-Consuming Journey …

Perhaps the greatest challenge for those involved in the collaborative projects we studied, however, was the amount of time and effort required for their implementation. Even those we interviewed who were at or near the end of a three year funding period were conscious of the distance they had still to travel to reach their goals. The great majority of those involved told us that they had greatly underestimated the length of time required to work collaboratively. However solid the foundation of common understanding and mutual trust with which they started, it was no more than a foundation and the development of agreed policies, processes and practices by which they could take the project forward had to be painstakingly erected. Collaboration required people to settle down for "a long haul".

… with an Unknown Destination

While the perceived need for more time was common across the different models of collaboration identified earlier in this report it appeared to be particularly important in the case of the more intense forms of partnership rather than the more limited and pragmatic examples we studied. In these cases, part of the explanation for the amount of time and effort needed was that the ways in which collaborative arrangements had developed were often unforeseen - and probably unforeseeable. One interviewee told us that the project with which he had been involved had begun life as a computer based exercise to produce a database of skills within the organisations; had become a wider process of sharing information; and had ended up as a piece of change management. As another study participant put it: "part of why collaboration takes such a long time is that you can't predict where collaboration will take you with any degree of precision".

Balancing Twin Goals – The Project versus the Collaboration

Another key issue for many of our case example collaborations was managing the tension between the process and the project – to develop the ability of the organisations to work together at the same time as making progress on the operational agenda of activities for which the organisations had come together – and on which the decision to fund the project had been made. We found some cases where participants regretted pursuing the project at the expense of the process and others where those involved had decided to let the project to take second place to the development of the collaborative work method.

Getting it Right

Having identified the key challenges or issues arising from the implementation of collaborative ways of working we will now turn to the lessons learned from the study which we hope will inform and guide future practice.

Establishing the Collaborative Arrangement

The case examples for this study generally went through two processes in order to arrive at the collaborative project funded by the Foundation. The first of these, although not necessarily in order, involved the selection of the organisations to be involved. Here we can distinguish between three mechanisms for achieving this.

- *self-selection*: either by way of an open invitation to all the organisations which might be thought have an interest in the issue or service or on the basis of participation in earlier activities (such as a conference).

- an *explicit choice* made by one or more key organisations with a major interest in the area of concern; or

- *guided choice* where Lloyds TSB Foundation staff provided the stimulus for a small group of organisations (usually with a common history of past funding by the Foundation) to come together to consider joint action.

The second activity was the process of developing a project or programme that was suitable for funding. While a few proposals appeared more or less fully formed the majority of them were hammered out over a period of time, more often than not with the active involvement of a member of the Lloyds TSB Foundation staff.

While a very small minority of the collaborations studied did have problems with the degree of commitment of some participating organisations the great majority had succeeded in creating the basis for effective partnership through the judicious selection of partners and the development of a sense of common ownership of the joint project or programme.

The Institutional "Hub" of the Collaboration

In most of the cases studied (and in all of those resembling models one and two in our classification) some kind of body - a steering or advisory group or a meeting of partners - formed the key institutional feature of the collaboration. The performance of this body was a key to the effectiveness of the partnership and this depended on:

- regular scheduled meetings to ensure business could be transacted;

- a commitment on the part of all the partners to attend meetings (or ensure that they were represented at them);

- adequate resourcing to ensure that agendas and supporting papers were prepared for each meeting in consultation with members;

- open and clear procedures to ensure adequate discussion and informed decision-making; and

- accurate and systematic recording of decisions and key points for further discussion.

In most cases, interviewees felt that the participating organisations had the common understanding to enable them to function as a group – although they welcomed the contribution to their discussions made by Lloyds TSB Foundation staff when they participated in them. One group had, however, found it desirable to bring in an independent person, unconnected with any of their organisations to chair meetings – as well as to act as the main point of contact for the project worker.

In the early days of some collaborations the members of this body had found it useful to organise "away days" to discuss difficult or meaty issues - sometimes with an independent facilitator. This gave them the time and space to reach agreement on some fundamental matters that underpinned the collaborative enterprise.

Formality and the Role of Trust

As we have noted above, the foundations for these collaborative projects were the relationships of trust between the participating organisations and several of them were happy to rely on trust as the means of maintaining their partnership. Others, however, felt that trust was a necessary but not sufficient basis on which to run their affairs and developed formal written agreements. In another set of cases, organisations had not drawn up written protocols but were beginning to regret their failure to do so. Key areas covered by these agreements were:

- the constitution and powers of the steering committee or partners' meeting;
- its standing orders and rules of procedure;
- the roles, rights and responsibilities of membership;
- procedures for resolving disagreements or conflicts; and
- a statement of the aims and objectives of the collaboration and the principal means by which they are to be achieved.

The extent to which these written agreements were seen as essential to the effective functioning of the partnership vary according to the scope of the collaboration; its intended life span; and the stage of development it had reached.

In what was possibly the ultimate act of formalising an organisational partnership, the organisations in one case example collaboration had decided to give their partnership a legal identity of its own, over and above that of its member bodies, by incorporating it as a company limited by guarantee.

"Embedding" the Collaboration

A rather different strategy for ensuring the long-term future of collaborative arrangements is to ensure that partnership is experienced at all levels of the participating organisations. Arrangements which are essentially "cosy clubs for chief executives" are vulnerable to changes in the individuals who hold those posts. Part of the answer appears to be effective communication across the organisation to ensure that all the constituent parts are aware of the collaboration and

what it is intended to achieve. In a number of the cases we looked at, however, there had been more vigorous attempts to embed the partnership in the wider organisation. This was most likely to involve the active participation of the governing body in the formation and development of the collaborative project but could also engage the interest of the wider team of paid staff and volunteers. Some of the collaborating organisations saw that as the next step: the critical issue for sustainability, according to one interviewee, was to transfer the collaboration from the four people currently involved to the thirty-odd people working across the four organisations and to retain an equivalent level of commitment.

Leadership and Management

Clearly, successful collaborations "don't just happen" and we were impressed with the general level of leadership and management skills demonstrated by the key individuals involved. Leading a collaborative venture calls for a distinctive set of skills that include:

- building coalitions in support of the objectives and methods of the partnership;
- balancing the tension between driving the project forward and developing the means of collaborating;
- reconciling the needs of the partnership with the goals of his/her own organisation;
- knowing when to accept an emerging consensus and when to continue to probe and challenge; and
- being aware of the changing nature of the collaborative venture and able to respond to change.

Several of the case example collaborations we studied had found it useful to engage independent facilitators to help them meet these challenges of leadership and management. This had two principal benefits:

- an external facilitator could ask searching questions which partners might be wary of asking one another and in this and other ways expedite the process of reaching agreement on sensitive issues; and
- an independent figure had a concern for the collaborative vision which was not skewed by the interest of any of the participating organisations. This could be especially helpful if the partnership employed a member of staff who was based in one of the partner organisations.

Role of Lloyds TSB Foundation Staff

One of the innovative features of the Collaborative Programme was the Foundation's willingness to invest the time of its grant-making staff in the projects as well as providing funding. As we have reported above, the amount of time and the kind of contribution made by staff varied from project to project but the general response of study participants to this "added value" was overwhelmingly positive. Within that we can identify four key roles played by staff which contributed to successful and effective collaborations.

The Midwife A small minority of the 18 projects needed little or no help from Foundation staff to see the light of day. Another comparatively small number were the direct consequence of the initiative of a member of staff. Four organisations, for instance, who worked in the same field and who had all been funded in the past by the Foundation were invited, encouraged or challenged to come forward with a funding proposal for a collaborative project. In a number of other cases staff had worked with potential applicants to shape the beginnings of an idea into a full proposal.

The Friend and Companion: Members of staff who kept in touch with the progress of collaborative projects, possibly through membership of their steering committees, enabled the Foundation to respond quickly and sympathetically to requests for it to allow grant-holders flexibility in implementing the programme of work. The staff member had shared the collaborative journey and thus had a greater understanding of the issues and the reasons why it might be advisable to deviate from project plans and revisit time scales

The Mature and Impartial Adviser: Involvement in the steering committee and other partnership bodies by Foundation staff was valued more generally than for its ability to provide an informed and sympathetic conduit to the Foundation. Lloyds TSB Foundation staff brought an independent and impartial view of the issues facing the partners from a very different but experienced and informed perspective and this was perceived as an important contribution to their decision-making.

The Guarantor: Finally the involvement of the Foundation and its staff provided partnerships and their members with a kind of authority, credibility or legitimacy which they otherwise felt they lacked; this was invaluable in persuading the external world to treat them seriously.

5. CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE FOUNDATION

Conclusions

While we have not been able to undertake a full review of the literature on collaboration, we believe that this study addresses a gap in our knowledge. While there have been a number of published studies of mergers in the voluntary sector and of multi-sector partnerships in field such as regeneration (which tend to focus on the allocation of resources) we are not aware of any significant work on the kinds of collaboration discussed in this report. We suggest, therefore, that our findings, as well as informing the Foundation's future grant-making policies and processes, should be of value to the voluntary sector as a whole.

Overall, our evidence is that considerable benefits have flowed and will flow in future from collaborations which aimed to:

- address issues or unmet needs which require a multi-agency approach;
- develop, improve or extend the provision of services; and/or
- enhance organisational capacity and effectiveness.

The limitations of our study – a "snap-shot" of eighteen case examples viewed through the eyes of the key participants in the organisations concerned – mean that we cannot demonstrate, except in a few instances, the impact these collaborative arrangements have had on the users or beneficiaries of the services and activities they have made possible. There is evidence that the scale and scope of some services have been extended and that the services that are being provided have become more accessible. But we cannot demonstrate that these and other changes were translated into better experiences and greater value for the beneficiaries. On the other hand, the common sense view is that this was a likely outcome of the investment made in the projects and programmes we studied.

We are on much firmer ground when we consider their impact on the organisations involved. Our informants reported widespread and, in some cases, very marked gains in capacity and the ability to achieve their goals.

The evidence from our interviewees is also unambiguous when it comes to the significance of the role of collaboration in enabling them to address issues and needs, improve and extend services and enhance the capacity of their organisations. Acting together was seen by the great majority of participants in the study as the "only" or the "best" way of achieving these aims.

The benefits of collaborative arrangements of this kind are clear but what of the costs? Making collaboration work requires a major investment of time and effort over a long period of time. This is especially true of the more intense or "pure" forms of partnership which have the potential to bring about major organisational changes and create significant and effective responses to social need.

Making collaboration work also needs skilled leadership and management. The qualities needed include the ability to form coalitions and provide them with leadership; an understanding of the dynamics of collaborative arrangements; and attention to the details of the mechanisms needed to make things work. And, in particular, their leaders need to be alert and sensitive to the changing nature of the collaboration as it develops over time as well as balancing the tension between the demands of the project and those of the collaborative process itself.

The value of the Foundation's "helping hand" has been two-fold. On the one hand, its funding has enabled organisations to afford the time and effort needed to develop collaborative working. On the other, the involvement of its staff has contributed to the management of the collaborative project or programme and enabled those concerned to respond to change.

Recommendations to the Foundation

The Future of the Collaborative Programme

The evidence is clear to us; the Foundation should continue to promote collaborative working between voluntary sector organisations through a dedicated grant-making programme. And, on the basis of this study, we recommend that the next phase of the Collaborative Programme should be given a sharper focus and a more consistent approach to implementation. More specifically, we suggest that the grant-making programme should consist of two unequal streams.

- The first - and much the larger - of these would involve the long-term investment of substantial funds in collaborative arrangements that conform to our *model one* (collaboration between equals) and which have the potential to deliver significant improvements in the benefits provided by the organisations concerned as well as enhancing their effectiveness.

- The second and smaller stream would fund collaborations with more modest aims and aspirations between organisations with little or no previous experience of working together with a view to assisting them to cross the "trust threshold". Most of these grants would be for *model three* partnerships.

Rationale

Our rationale for recommending a major investment in *model one* partnerships between equals for a shared aim or purpose is based on the conclusion that these arrangements are most likely to deliver not only greater organisational effectiveness for the organisations involved but also important improvements in the range, scope and quality of services to people living in disadvantaged communities. In short, these are the projects which will deliver the twin aims of the programme to the highest degree. This is not to argue that *model two* collaborations have not delivered considerable benefits but we take the view that collaboration here takes a more instrumental form than in *model one collaborations*; in the former it tends to be a means to an end while in the latter it is one of the aims of the project and an end in itself. There seemed to be little, if any, reason why the *model two* examples needed to be funded by a collaborative programme rather than the community programme. *Model one* proposals, by contrast, did not fit so easily into a programme that was not committed to promoting partnership as an end as well as a means.

The case for the smaller grant stream with its bias towards *model three* is based on our findings that partnerships needed to be built on the foundation of pre-existing mutual understanding and trust. Grants of this kind will not only enable organisations to use resources more effectively through sharing them but also begin to break down the isolation in which many – especially smaller agencies – work and enable them to consider longer term collaborations with potentially much greater impact.

Implementation

Such a refocusing of the programme raises a number of issues for its implementation, especially of the major grant stream. These include:

a) A willingness to commit Foundation funds to the support of collaborative arrangements over a time scale which is considerably longer than three years. We suggest a normal initial commitment of five years with the possibility of an extension beyond that.

b) A recognition that the terms on which funding is provided need to be flexible in order to take account of the difficulty of predicting the ways in which the collaboration might develop. A commitment in principle to fund an arrangement for five years, for example, might involve a detailed strategy and budget for the first two years only with a view to planning for the later period further down the line.

c) A commitment to collaborative working between the Foundation and the grant-holder and its partners. This would normally be expressed through the involvement of a member of the Foundation's grant-making staff as a "friend and companion" as well as an "impartial adviser" who would participate in meetings of the steering group or meeting of partners which forms the "institutional hub" of the collaboration.

d) A recognition that the participating organisations may need to place a greater emphasis in the early stages of the project on issues of process – developing their capacity to work collaboratively – rather than on those of project or programme – delivering specific outputs and outcomes.

e) The development of some basic requirements for good practice which funded partnerships would be expected to meet. These might be based on formal written agreements which covered the powers, constitution and procedures of the body that formed the "institutional hub"; the roles, rights and responsibilities of membership; procedures for resolving disagreements or conflicts; as well as the aims and objectives of the collaboration and the principal means of meeting them. These agreements would then be revisited form time to time and, if necessary, amended.

Additional Recommendations

As well as our key recommendations about the future focus and shape of the Collaborative Programme and its implementation we also suggest that the Foundation should give serious consideration to ways in which it can develop and disseminate a body of experience-based knowledge about the practice of collaboration between voluntary sector organisations. In this context we suggest that:

a) In the first place, the Foundation should consider how to disseminate the lessons learned from the present study about the issues and challenges of collaborative working more widely. One option would be to run a workshop involving people who took part in the study which would review the findings and advise on the best form of presenting the lessons to a wider audience. The Impact Assessment Report could then be complemented by a "How to" publication.

b) In the longer term, learning might be enhanced by offering participants in the Collaborative Programme opportunities to exchange experiences and ideas among themselves through such means as a network facilitated by the Foundation which involved meetings (possibly national and regional workshops) and web-based interaction.

c) Finally, the limitations of the present study need to be acknowledged and addressed. Instead of our snap-shot of collaborations at one point in their history we need longitudinal studies of selected examples of collaborative arrangements. These would enable us to improve our understanding of the processes involved over the life of the partnerships and to make a more informed assessment of their impact on the users or beneficiaries. Evaluation of this kind should be built into the new Collaborative Programme.

APPENDIX 1

LIST OF COLLABORATIONS, BY "LEAD CHARITY"

Beth Johnson Foundation
Carmarthen Family Centre
Chinese Mental Health Association
Counsel and Care
CVS Maldon & District
DEMAND – Design and Manufacture for Disability
ICAN
Institute of Fundraising
Jill Dando Institute of Crime Science, University College London
Merseyside Third Sector Technology Centre
Merseyside Police & High Sheriffs Charitable Trust
NCH
Ormiston Children and Families Trust
Scope
Suffolk Refugee Support Group
RNID Cymru – Royal National Institute for Deaf People, Wales
Voluntary Action Cumbria
WCVA – Wales Council for Voluntary Action

APPENDIX 2

INTERVIEW DOCUMENTATION

NOTES FOR INTERVIEWERS

This schedule is the principal means of collecting data from grant recipients and other key informants about their experience of and perspectives of the programme.

Interviews will be semi-structured with a number of questions for all interviewees so we seek information about the same issues and phenomena from all of them. The questions are relatively "open" and the interviewee will be able to choose how to answer them; this will give us a view of what they find important and interesting without us pre-judging this. Most of the questions have a number of bulleted prompts to be used at the discretion of the interviewer when we want to clarify or focus what it is we are asking.

Please use your judgement and "customise" the schedule to meet your needs and the circumstances of the interview. This might include:

- *Paraphrasing the questions and prompts to use language with which you and your interviewee(s) are more comfortable*
- *Varying the order in which you ask questions*
- *Referring to previous answers when asking later questions – "you told me that … is there anything to add about …"*
- *Tailoring the interview to the person being interviewed – e.g. not asking them questions to which they cannot know the answers.*

We are interested in:

- *The "initial spark" that led to a collaborative approach*
- *How that initial interest was developed into a project or programme of work*
- *The ways in which collaboration was conceived and implemented*
- *The problems and difficulties of working collaboratively and ways in which they might be addressed*
- *The outcomes and impacts of the project or programme on the organisation(s) concerned and their users/beneficiaries; and*
- *The contribution made by the Foundation and its staff to the achievement of these outcomes/impacts.*

Collecting data about these issues and interests will enable us to:

- *measure the value of the contribution of the programme to (a) enhancing the effectiveness of voluntary sector organisations and (b) enabling them to make a greater difference to the lives of disadvantaged people;*

- *identify the barriers to successful collaboration and the ways in which these can be addressed or overcome;*

- *develop models of effective collaborative approaches; and*

- *suggest ways in which the Foundation and its staff can maximise its contribution to the development of the voluntary sector's capacity to improve the lives of disadvantaged people through collaboration with other voluntary agencies and across sectors.*

THE SCHEDULE

Introduction

Please explain who you are and why you are conducting the interview. Offer a background to the Impact Assessment project, a brief explanation of the process and the forthcoming report, which will be sent to all participants. Stress that it is the Programme and the Foundation that are being evaluated and not their project or their organisation. Clarify confidentiality and anonymity – we will only identify informants and projects in the report with their prior consent

You may want to let the interviewee know that you have little prior knowledge of this collaborative project, and that this is intended.

Briefly explain the structure of the interview with the interviewee, and clarify who will be asking the questions / taking notes.

If appropriate, ask interviewee(s) for a brief description of their role(s) in the organisation(s) and the part they played in the collaborative project.

Origins and Genesis of the Project

1. Why did this start? What was driving it? What change did your collaborative project intend to bring about?

    - *Need to strengthen organisational capacity*
    - *Need to use resources more effectively*
    - *Need for new activities*
    - *Need to extend existing activities*

2. What kind of process led to the development of the application that was approved by the Foundation? Who was driving it forward?

    - *Role of Foundation staff*
    - *Role of lead organisation*
    - *Contribution of other organisations to the design and development of the proposal*
    - *Selection of partners for the project – why only those partners*
    - *Other partners that did not get involved*
    - *Previous history of contact between organisations or individuals*

The Collaborative Process

3. What kinds of collaboration are involved?

    - *Information sharing*
    - *Resource sharing*
    - *Joint planning*
    - *Creating an alliance or network*
    - *Joint venture or partnership*
    - *Joint delivery of service*

4. Who is involved and how?

    - *Who takes the lead?*
    - *What contributions do the other partners make?*
    - *Who is involved from each partner?*
    - *Role of Lloyds TSB Foundation staff and impact of them not being involved*

5. What systems or structures have been put in place to make the collaboration work?

    - *Is there a defined structure for the collaborative work?*
    - *How are things co-ordinated?*
    - *Are there written agreements or protocols?*
    - *Methods of communication*
    - *Business plan*
    - *Can partners withdraw? Have they? Are they all active?*

6. Have you experienced challenges or difficulties whilst trying to work collaboratively? Please give examples.

    - *Differences in organisational culture*
    - *Lack of time*
    - *Lack of skills or resources*
    - *Problems of communication*
    - *Lack of experience/skills on collaborative working*

7. With the benefit of hindsight, how would you do things differently if you were starting all over again?

8. What would you do the same? What worked? What have you particularly enjoyed?

The Outcomes of the Collaboration

9. To what extent did you achieve what you set out to do? Please give specific examples which show the difference the collaborative work has made.

    - *more (larger volume) of existing service*
    - *different (e.g. targeted, outreach, new places) services*
    - *better (e.g. frequency, level of service, integrated) services*
    - *cost effectiveness*
    - *stronger organisation(s)*

10. Please identify areas where you did not achieve what you had hoped to and explain why you think this happened.

    - *deviation from initial project plan*
    - *strategic and operational variations*

11. Were there any unplanned or unexpected outcomes from the collaboration?

Impact of the Collaboration

12. Can you state, in specific terms, exactly what benefits this collaboration has brought? :

    - *to the service users/beneficiaries?*
    - *to the organisations?*
    - *to others?*
    - *to the issue?*

13. Was a collaborative approach the only way these benefits could have been secured? Was it the best way?

14. In addition to the grant, what did you value most about the Foundation's involvement with the project?

15. Would it have been possible without the involvement of the Foundation?

    - *Initial prompting /openness to idea*
    - *Continued interest and staff time*
    - *Money*

16. Have you undertaken an evaluation of the project either internally, or through an external consultant? (if the answer is yes, or even if it is an interim evaluation, please request a copy of the evaluation report.)

The Future

17. Will the present collaborative arrangements (collaborative spirit) be sustained when the collaborative programme ends?

    - *Wider collaboration*
    - *Less formal collaborative working*

18. Do you have plans/aspirations to develop the existing arrangements further?

    - *Closer collaborative arrangements*
    - *Wider range of areas for collaboration*
    - *More partners*

19. Have you taken or do you plan to take any steps to disseminate or publicise the outcomes of your collaborative project?

    - *publications*
    - *conferences or other events*
    - *learnings from the collaborative process*

Finally

20. Is there anything we haven't covered that you would like to tell me about?

THANK YOU AND GOODBYE!

As well as thanking them for their time and interest we should aim to finish by reminding them what will happen next.